

U.S. EDUCATION AND SERVICE LEARNING

by Sandra Jacobs

Michelle Obama said recently, "There's a feeling that you get when you help someone achieve their goals: the fulfillment of putting your faith into action and feeling that you're a part of something that's bigger than yourself and doing your part for the greater good."

The Obama Administration is continuing a longstanding tradition in the U.S. federal government of promoting community-based service. Service-learning programs represent a major part of that commitment, but what exactly is service learning?

Service learning brings together meaningful community service with

relevant instruction and reflection to enhance the learning experience, demonstrate civic responsibility, and improve communities. This hands-on learning and teaching approach is used at all levels of formal and informal education in the United States, from primary schools to universities, nonprofit and religious organizations.

The basis of service learning is the linkage between service and learning objectives, with the ultimate goal of transforming both the recipient and the provider of the service. It allows community members, students and educators to engage in active education while addressing

community needs and concerns.

Although community service and civic engagement have been present on American university campuses since the 19th century, the 1960s saw an increased focus on activist education. Students participated in the civil rights movement and volunteered for the newly-formed Peace Corps and Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). These experiences engaged young people and gave them real-world opportunities to make an impact in the local community. Since the first university graduates signed up for the Peace Corps, 195,000 volunteers have spent two years of their lives in service in over 134 countries. One

such volunteer was President Jimmy Carter's mother, Lillian Carter, who served the leper community in the Godrej Colony 30 kilometers outside Mumbai.

The term "service learning" was first used by educators in 1967 to combine the achievement of tasks to meet genuine human needs with conscious educational growth. Advocates of formalizing service learning on university campuses met in Atlanta in 1969, with representatives from the U.S. Department of Health, Education



Ukrainian youth participants of service-learning program "Leave No Trace" project proudly display their results from a forest cleanup.

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The American Center

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H O L I D A Y S

August 19 : Parsi New Year

A WORD FROM THE CENTER

Greetings from the American Center! For many Americans, the "lazy days" of August are a time for summer holidays, traveling, and enjoying rest and relaxation. The summer of 2009, however, has seen an increase in the number of citizens spending their holidays serving their communities. The U.S. is currently going through a "compassion boom": applications to national service program AmeriCorps have quadrupled, the Peace Corps has three times as many applications as slots, while Teach for America's 4,000 vacancies attracted 35,000 newly-minted university graduates.

Why the boom? Perhaps the depressed economy has simply brought out the best in people who are responding to tough economic times by reaching out to help their neighbors. Perhaps it is because there are some faint glimmers of light at the end of the dark economic tunnel. In a difficult job market, Americans increasingly, are choosing service over salary. Since the U.S. economic crisis recession has reduced career options for many, record numbers of young aspiring professionals have ventured out onto the public service track.

President Obama has helped by making volunteerism an administrative priority. At the same time, there is an awareness that the federal and state governments cannot provide all of the solutions; economic recovery is dependent on citizen engagement. Those interested in serving are aided by a new White House web site, www.serve.gov, enhanced by search-friendly technology through pro-bono help from Google, LinkedIn and Facebook.

We hope you enjoy Sandy Jacobs' article on service learning in the U.S. education system, and that you will join us for our upcoming events. We're also very pleased to announce that the American Library will now be open on Saturdays. Come check it out!

Sincerely,



Robyn Remeika
Acting Deputy Director

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and Welfare; the Southern Regional Education Board; Atlanta Urban Corps; Peace Corps; VISTA and others. They discussed the benefits and challenges of service learning, and the best way to implement service-learning programs in American colleges and universities. Their recommendations were:

- Colleges and universities should encourage students to participate in community service by making it part of the curriculum and giving them credit on completion.

- Colleges and universities, private organizations, and federal, regional, and state governments should provide opportunities and funds for students wanting to participate in service learning.
- Students, public and private agency officials, as well as college and university faculty should all participate in the planning and running of service-learning programs.

These recommendations formed the foundation of service-learning programs across America. National efforts to promote service continue to the present day. The Campus Outreach Opportunity League, National Association of Service and Conservation Corps, Youth Service America, Campus Compact and AmeriCorps all found new and innovative ways to link volunteerism and service to the learning process.

Federal support was solidified almost 20 years ago when the National and Community Service Act was passed by Congress and signed by President George H. W. Bush. This legislation created the organization Serve America and formalized nationally-funded grants to promote service learning in schools, youth corps, nonprofits, colleges and universities. Serve America's stated goal was to "distribute grants in support of service learning in order to simultaneously enrich the education of young people, demonstrate the value of youth as assets to their communities, and stimulate service learning as a strategy to meet unmet community needs." The most recent



Ukrainian children enjoy outdoor activities on International Youth Day.

addition to this effort is the current "United We Stand" campaign (www.serve.gov), encouraging all Americans to address community needs in education, health, energy and the environment, and community renewal.

So what does service learning look like in real life? City

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NOTES FROM THE AMERICAN LIBRARY

Select Books Available on Community Service Learning and Education



2009 The College Board College Handbook

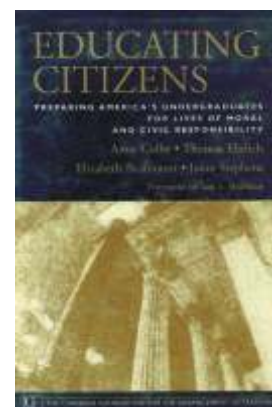
The College Board, 2008

This handbook contains objective information on every accredited college in the United States. Detailed descriptions of 3,800 accredited colleges and 40 indexes help students to narrow down a college search and compare the schools they're interested in.

Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility

by Anne Colby et al
Jossey-Bass, 2003

Educating Citizens reports on how some American colleges and universities are preparing thoughtful, committed, and socially responsible graduates. The authors demonstrate the fundamental importance of moral and civic education. The book includes rich examples from in-depth studies at 12 institutions and from a wide range of effective programs and approaches on other campuses.



Making Good Citizens: Education and Civil Society

Edited by Diane Ravitch and Joseph P. Viteritti
Yale University Press, 2001

In this book, leading thinkers from a variety of disciplines probe the relation between a healthy democracy and education. Contributors to this book discuss topics that range from the place of religion in public life to political conflict in a pluralist society, to the enduring problems of racial inequality.

American Library Now Open on Saturdays

The library will open to the public on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. beginning August 1. Please join us that day for events including a film screening and free library membership.

In addition, the library will offer wireless Internet connectivity to patrons owning laptops.

For details, please contact: libref@state.gov

Note: To access eJournal USA, please visit <http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa.html>

Ask a Librarian: Please write to the American Library at libref@state.gov for research queries related to information on U.S. international relations, education, law and legislation, English language, and literature.

American Musicals and Social Issues

Discussion led by Daniel Cisek

Monday, August 17

American Center Auditorium

6:00 p.m.

The discussion will cover how Broadway musicals have examined serious social issues including racial prejudice, juvenile delinquency, urban decay, and HIV/AIDS. Examples will include *Showboat*, *South Pacific*, *West Side Story*, and *Rent*. While sometimes seen as light entertainment or an escapist art form, American musicals have frequently included elements that reflect and critique the social problems of the day. Classic musicals provide a fascinating glimpse at the historical time period in which they were made. They can also be credited with raising public consciousness about serious social injustices and helping the effort to combat those injustices.

Daniel Cisek is originally from Chicago. He joined the Foreign Service in 2007, and is serving his first tour in Mumbai. He joined the State Department in 2005, and worked in offices covering Russia and East Asia. Earlier, he worked as a staff aide in the United States Senate, a graduate fellow at the U.S. Embassy, Moscow, and as a newspaper reporter in the Chicago area. Dan has a B.A. in History and Political Science from Northwestern University, and an M.A. in International Relations and Russian Politics from Indiana University. He enjoys movies, music, musical theater, and all forms of popular culture. He is a fan of Aamir Khan, Anurag Kashyap, and Madhur Bhandarkar.

American Center Auditorium
3:30 and 6:30 p.m.

Friday, August 21

The Pursuit of Happyness
(2006, 117 mins)

Inspired by actual events, this uplifting drama stars Will Smith as Chris Gardner, a medical industry salesman in 1980s San Francisco, struggling to provide for his family. After his decision to take an unpaid internship with a stockbroking firm alienates his wife, he is left to raise their five-year-old child alone. Facing such obstacles as homelessness and poverty, the pair strives to follow their shared dream for a better future. With Jaden Christopher Syre Smith, Thandie Newton, and James Karen.



Friday, August 28

Pay it Forward
(2000, 123 mins)

Teacher Kevin Spacey's assignment to "think of an idea that could change the world" spurs seventh-grader Hayley Joel Osment to launch a campaign in which people perform random acts of charity and the recipients follow with three good deeds of their own. As his "Pay It Forward" plan becomes a nationwide movement, Osment plays matchmaker between his mom, divorced waitress Helen Hunt, and the scarred Spacey. This moving and inspirational drama also stars Jon Bon Jovi and Jay Mohr.

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Year (www.cityyear.org) is one such service-learning program that brings together young people of all backgrounds for a year of full-time service. During that year, youth volunteers serve as tutors, mentors and role models to at-risk children. They also develop civic leadership skills they can use in their future careers and throughout a lifetime of community service.

Service-learning programs not only provide much-needed support to local communities, but also teach program participants valuable skills in problem solving, project management, facilitation, and civic leadership. They impart a sense of community responsibility and activism. Many program participants go on to work in a variety of service-oriented professions, and often credit their early experiences in service learning as a major factor in their career choices. Indeed, President Obama often cites service as having had an immeasurable effect on his life, helping him to discover himself and his place in the larger story of America.

Sandra Jacobs works at the U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai

Note: Internet sites included in this issue of the bulletin, other than those of the U.S. Government, should not be construed as an endorsement of the views contained therein.

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Admission to all American Center programs, restricted to persons over 16, will be on a first-come, first-served basis. The auditorium doors will open 30 minutes before the start of the program.